



Abu'l-Qasem Ferdowsi, the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), vol. I. by Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh;
Abu'l-Qasem Ferdowsi

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the *Early Islamic Period* (New York, 1982); and the present text. A planned fourth one on glassware by Jens Kröger is to complete the whole story. It would have been more appropriate to present these related texts in a serially arranged order, namely, *Nishapur* I, II, III, etc.

The present volume was completed in 1986 (p. 14) shortly before Wilkinson's death, and the editing has been done with care and enthusiasm. The result is breathtaking. It is one of the finest excavation reports this reviewer has seen, and easily ranks among the finest studies on an Islamic city. It opens with 33 color plates superbly reproducing the main decorative elements of the excavated sites, and each is charmingly captioned so that the reader at once realizes the scope and significance of the excavations and the nature of the report. Pages 33–46 are devoted to an introduction, chronicling the scholarship of the investigation, an account of the topography and history of Nishapur, and a description of the expedition. Then come chapters on the major sites: Tepe Madraseh (pp. 47–185), The Vineyard Tepe (pp. 186–218), Sabz Pushan (pp. 219–58), and the Qanat Tepe (pp. 259–90). In each case, the brick work, carved plaster and wall paintings are carefully described and illustrated. The wall painting from the Qanata Tepe Bathhouse is treated separately (appendix I, pp. 291–309) while a careful laboratory report on the methods of preserving the fragmentary painted plaster of the same is given on pp. 310–14. A rich and detailed bibliography (pp. 317–22) adds to the value of the text, which is likewise enhanced by a glossary of technical terms (pp. 315–16) and a detailed general index (pp. 323–28).

The first concern of any reviewer of a report like this is that it is published half a century after the excavations themselves, when memories and documents may have become faulty. The editor reassures us, however (p. 14), that Wilkinson's memory of the events remained amazingly fresh and his documentation sources totally intact, indeed, enriched. The second point is that in an excavation report, details of a historical nature are usually entered sparingly and with exiguous documentation; yet this book is a font of historical information and deduction. The reader soon finds that everything Wilkinson says is backed by authentic sources or sound art-historical observations. Thus, after a long analysis of all available data—coins, paintings, tapestry, metal works, historical notices—the author comes to the conclusion that the famous horseman of the Vineyard Tepe was a tenth-century magnate—even a Samanid prince (p. 218). Similarly, the matter-of-factness of the excavation report does not force the author to limit himself to figures, drawings and citations. He analyzes every bit of evidence to adduce historical and cultural clues to the life of the city in its golden days, the 9th–12th centuries, where “people of lower rank than rulers . . . lived in an elegant and interesting fashion” (p. 290), where Arabic inscriptions in the annals “reminded us of the dominance of Arabic in Iran for decorative purposes, even in secular buildings” (p. 289).

Many students of art history, history, and Islamic studies will find this book a font of information on details of their respective fields. An Iranian will find it a treasure of immeasurable value not only on these accounts, but also, sadly, on account of the fate of Nishapur, which after the Metropolitan Museum's expedition in 1947 was left in the hands of art smugglers and land developers. They ruined what could have been a source of incalculable art historical and cultural knowledge. The author laments, with sincere feeling, the deplorable destruction of “a site proved of the first importance” and comments: “Nishapur deserved a better fate than death by looting.” The concurring reader can find consolation only in the fact that the accounts by Wilkinson and his colleagues have preserved a fine picture of Nishapur's culture, and the Metropolitan Museum's collection has made the preservation easier and guaranteed.

The text is remarkably free of errors. Only the rendering of non-English terms needs a note, despite the explanation given on p. 316. It would have been more useful to *transliterate*—rather than transcribe—Arabic and Persian words and names, especially when recording fragmentary inscriptions (e.g., pp. 88–89, 235, 279–80) or the glossary. In the latter category, the term *sarruj* (p. 316) must be rendered *sārūj*. The “raised seats along the walls,” for which the text employs the Persian term *liwan* (p. 75), may better be rendered as *sakū* or *takht*, especially as *liwan* more commonly means “drinking glass.”

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Abu'l-Qasem Ferdowsi, The *Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*), vol. I. Edited by DJALAL KHALEGHI-MOTLAGH. Bibliotheca Persica, Persian Texts Series, n.s., no. 1. New York: STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS, 1988. Pp. ix + 34, 374 [Persian]. \$88.50.

For centuries, the primary reason for producing any edition of the *Šahnama*, the great epic of Firdausi/Ferdowsi (fl. A.D. 1000), also known as the “national history” of Iran, was the magnificence of the illustrations and calligraphy. This resulted in the creation of a number of manuscripts which rank among masterpieces of Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar art (such as the Baysunghuri *Šahnama*; the *Šah Tahmaspi Š.*, now in the Houghton Library, and the *Visal Š.*). The earliest editors of the *Šahnama* (Mathew Lumsden, one volume only [Calcutta, 1811], and Turner Macan [Calcutta, 1829]) tried to reject what were not Firdausi's words or stories, and J. Mohl (Paris, 1838–78) and J. A. Vullers (Leiden, 1877–84) made further advances toward this goal. Their works were supplemented and improved by the Borukhim edition (Tehran, 1934–36),

which was supervised by such scholars as M. Minavi, Abbas Eqbal, and S. Nafisi. Finally, the Oriental Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences published a critical edition of the *Šahnama* (9 vols., Moscow, 1960–71), prepared by E. E. Bertels and his learned associates. This was received with deserved acclaim, but deeper studies proved the need for a more carefully prepared edition, especially since a manuscript dated 614/1217, containing the first one-third of the *Šahnama*, was discovered in 1977 (in Florence, by M. A. Piemontese) which predated by sixty years the oldest texts hitherto known (i.e., London BM Ad 21. 103). Iranian scholars, led by M. Minavi, were striving for such an edition before the latter's death and the coming of the Revolution. The closest colleague—and successor—of Minavi, Professor Khaleghi-Motlagh, has continued the task in Hamburg; the present volume is a great achievement. Previously he had written numerous articles and explained his methods and his materials, but he lucidly recapitulates the main criteria and sources in his introduction, while Professor Ehsan Yarshater ably outlines—in his Persian and English introductions—the history of the editions of the *Šahnama*. Earlier, David Eugene Smith provided a fine bibliography of the *Šahnama* manuscripts in certain leading libraries of the world (*Firdausi Celebration 935–1935* [New York 1936], 27ff.), introducing thirty-nine pre-1500 texts. Later Minavi and the Moscow editors added to the list (see esp. I. Afšar, *Kitābšīnāsi-yi Firdausi*, 2nd rev. ed. [Tehran, 1976]), and Khaleghi prepared a more complete and scholarly listing (see *Iran-Nameh* III [Spring 1985]: 387–406; IV [Fall 1985]: 16–47; IV [Winter 1985]: 225–55).

The appearance of this volume, the first of six, of the critical edition of the *Shahnameh* (*Šahnama*) is a welcome boon to the students of Iranian literature, history, and philology. The chief merit of the text is the editor's remarkable improvement on previous readings, resulting from his judicial use of the oldest extant manuscripts, as well as from his profound understanding of the language, style and thought of Firdausi. He has been fortunate on several accounts. First, he has been able to use as his basic text the Florence manuscript dated to 614/1217. This has made a good number of corrections possible or justified. Second, his close and long cooperation with Muṭṭaba Minavi, one of the most learned Iranian scholars and the founder of the *Šahnama* Foundation in Tehran, has made his editorial undertaking easier yet more profound. The Foundation had already paved the way for a critical edition of the *Šahnama* by establishing certain scholarly criteria and collecting various sources, including the microfilm copies of the oldest *Šahnama* manuscripts known. This long and earnest study finds reflections on every page of the present edition, with its numerous notes (an average of 35) on manuscript variants or emendations. Third, mastery of the classical New Persian, thorough study of epic composition in Iran, and familiarity with Iranian mythology and the research devoted to that subject have all combined to enable Professor

Motlagh to recognize clearly Firdausi's vocabulary, and distinguish interpolated passages or even stories (e.g., pp. 10–12, 14, 21, 30, 62, 65, 66–67, 73, 118, 124–25, 152–57, 165–67, 170–77, 213, 234–36, 250–52, 262–64, 275–81, 305, 308, 318, 329, 333–34, 339–41). Finally, he had a sponsor—Yarshater—and an organization which combined patience with enthusiasm, generosity with taste and practicality with accuracy in order to produce a text with over 150,000 notes on manuscript variations and word explanations, without making remarkable errors. As a result, one can say that we have now a portion of the *Šahnama* almost as close to Firdausi's own version as our resources allow us to hope for. A traditional feature of the *Šahnama*, the heading and subheading of the stories, which were left out in the Moscow edition, are here revived, and rightly so, making the reading and citing of passages easier. Naturally, there are points on which this writer would take issue with the editor's readings or emendations, but such discussions may be left for a more detailed review.

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Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān.

Edited by ANDREW RIPPIN. New York and London: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1988. Pp. xii + 334. \$60.

As with a great many books that emerge out of conferences, this book is a collection of highly disparate and very loosely interconnected essays. The title suggests a thematic unity which the pages simply do not bear out, and the editor's attempt in the introduction to show that they do is unconvincing. The editor does, it is true, begin his introduction with a truly sophisticated statement of the kinds of questions that must be dealt with in any study of the history of the interpretation of the Qurʾān. He thus proves himself to be personally well grounded in the concerns of literary criticism and hermeneutics. But to say that "the essays that follow in this book are all attempts to answer these sorts of questions" (p. 5) is to stretch a point. If "approaches" means methodological orientations, it is difficult to see how the essays represent different approaches to a commonly perceived body of questions. Only in describing the essays in part II does the editor characterize approaches ("descriptive," "historical," and "topical"), but his characterizations seem forced.

Several of the essays are not directly concerned with the interpretation of the Qurʾān. Brockett's central thesis relates to the transmission of the Qurʾān. Kister's essay is primarily a collection of legendary material relating to Adam drawn both from *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*; though much of it constitutes an